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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

State of the Union, 1962

THERE WERE few surprises in the President's State of the Union message to Congress and the people of the United States. Liberals and conservatives scanned this latest Presidential document with fear and hope—on very different grounds, of course—but neither group has had its worst fears confirmed or its best hopes realized. Generally, Mr. Kennedy's outlook for the next year tends to be a liberal one, but not to an extent which would rouse much passion.

Yet there were many important and promising notes in Mr. Kennedy's report. One immediately reassuring characteristic of the speech was its emphasis on domestic concerns. Too often, in recent years, consideration of the state of the American union has tended to be dominated by the cold war and anxiety over what the Soviets might do next. And, like the previous occupant of the White House, Mr. Kennedy has sometimes fallen into the trap of formulating United States objectives more as responses to Soviet challenges than as positive fulfillments of our own intentions and aspirations.

The long list of legislative measures called for by the President is also undeniably impressive. Mr. Kennedy proposed "a bold new instrument of American trade policy," a five-year Trade Expansion Act to give him broad tariff-cutting powers as a means of meeting the competition of the swiftly developing European Common Market. He asked for authority to cut personal income taxes temporarily as a means of combatting future recessions. He called for anti-crime, urban transit and air-pollution legislation, and he renewed his proposal for a new Cabinet department of Urban Affairs and Housing. He promised a new, "comprehensive farm program" to meet the present chaotic situation. He suggested wide public health and welfare programs and reiterated his requests for federal aid to education and medical care for the aged.

Why, then, the lack of enthusiasm from liberals for a legislative program with so much good in it? Conversely, why the lack of indignation from the vigilantes of the Right?

ONE REASON for the calmness, perhaps, is that the President's first year in office revealed—for better or worse—considerable and repeated discrepancies between his announced intentions and subsequent actions. On the basis of the record, therefore, it would seem equally premature for liberal Democrats to throw their hats in the air or for conservative Republicans to take to the barricades.

Another damper on the reaction to the State of the Union message was the conciliatory tone of its delivery. Mr. Kennedy began the message with a reminder to his Congressional listeners that he and they were "not rivals for power but partners for progress," and he concluded his introductory remarks to the Congress with a modest and ingratiating observation: "It is my task to report the state of the Union; to improve it is the task of us all."

More significantly, however, the President wrapped his most controversial proposals—the free trade program, for example—in assurances of "moderation" and "responsibility" which conveyed the impression that they would not really be controversial at all. The Trade Expansion Act, he said, would be carefully designed to "make certain that its benefits far outweigh its risks," and it would not neglect "the safeguards provided by peril points, an escape clause or the national security amendment."

Other hot potatoes were handled with the same gingerness. Mr. Kennedy did little more than call attention to the aid to education and medical care bills he offered last year, doing so in a manner that indicated little disposition to fight for them. Suggestions for other health and welfare measures remained comfortably vague and general. Civil rights received only a nod, and the long-promised

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executive order banning discrimination in federally assisted housing was not even mentioned.

It is, therefore, hard to predict on the basis of the President's message what he intends to press for in 1962. A surge of Administration vigor and a march to new frontiers is not impossible, but the signs point to a continuing strategy of placating the conservative opposition, especially the Southerners in the President's own party, and settling for minimal achievements rather than risk an all-out political battle which the Congress might well win.

If conciliation and compromise are indeed to be the President's tactics this year, and there seems little doubt of it by now, we can only say that we are unconvinced of the efficacy of this approach. Even from the experiences of Mr. Kennedy's first year in office, it seems to us that his compromises and minimal demands simply did not work. Last year, to mollify the conservative opposition in Congress, Administration proposals in many crucial areas were scaled down to such a point that they were inadequate even before they fell into the hands of Congressional "economizers," who were not in the least deterred from cutting them back even more. Unemployment relief, anti-recession measures, aid to depressed areas and minimum wage legislation were only some of the programs which suffered this double attrition.

For the President to go to the people, on the other hand, seems to us the only way to overcome the Congressional opposition he faces. Mr. Kennedy is right when he says that he and Congress are not rivals for power but trustees for the American people. The implication behind that fact, however, is that Congressmen are responsive chiefly to the will of their constituents. All the Presidential tactics and blandishments in the world are not going to move them if they think they are reflecting the views of the people who keep them in office. Mr. Kennedy has always been successful in the past when he took his case to the American people, and, in 1962, for any real progress toward the goals he has outlined in his State of the Union message, we think the President will have to go to the people.

Catholics and Secular Colleges

AT JUST about this time every year, thousands of anxious high school seniors—and their no less anxious parents—fill out college application forms. As part of this ritual, letters of recommendation must be solicited, entrance examinations taken, and transcripts of grades submitted. None are likely to enjoy this ordeal; most will suffer.

For a few, however, the application process will be particularly painful. These are the Catholic high school seniors who will be told by their principals that their school will not recommend them to non-Catholic colleges and will not send their grades to such colleges. In some schools they will even be threatened with expulsion if they apply to a non-Catholic college. We are not referring here to those few dioceses where the bishop, usually to assure Newman Club participation, requires permission for attendance at a non-Catholic college. Instead, we are thinking of those places where the school takes it upon itself to decide the matter.

No doubt some honest worries about the faith of the students lie behind this arbitrary and abusive practice. But such a practice is an abuse. It is obviously an abuse of a school's authority over its students: no school has the right to direct the life of a student after he has left its hands. It is no less an abuse of the parents' right and duty to make decisions about their child's education.

For many a parent and student the problem of a Catholic versus a non-Catholic college is a vexing one. In individual instances there are numerous considerations which must enter into the decision. At the least, given the present crowded—and sometimes inadequate—state of Catholic higher education, the problem is too complicated and personal a one to be decided by a school edict.

Fortunately, most non-Catholic colleges are aware of the situation and will honor privately documented applications. That is a help. But the main relief must come from the schools. The ideal of a Catholic education is ill-served by coercion.

Utilizing Our Abundance

PERHAPS it is time for a fresh look at the nation's agricultural policy. Except for the war years, Washington has been troubled by farm surpluses for several decades. It has long sought to meet the problem through "soil conservation" and other production controls. The Kennedy Administration's variations on this policy have left things much as before; burdensome surpluses still cost taxpayers a billion dollars annually only for storage.

With a proficiency that must be the envy of Soviet farm experts, we have doubled per capita productivity in the past ten years. Our annual harvests increase faster than our growth in population. As curtailed acreages continue to produce far in excess of domestic demand, Secretary Freeman is appealing to the nation's farmers for help in solving the persisting "crisis of abundance."

His advisory commission has come up with a series of recommendations which would intensify

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government efforts to curtail production on the farm. It would take people off marginal land (which accounts for little of the surplus, anyway) and shift them into industry (where jobs are available only here and there). It would convert millions more acres of now-productive farmland into grasslands, woods and recreation areas (for which admittedly there could be real use). The main emphasis would be on sharply curtailing production.

But in what sense can it be said that there are actually food surpluses in the world today? Assuredly many countries find that their food production cannot keep pace with a steady rise in population. In such ill-fed areas as Latin America, for example, food shortages are expected to grow progressively worse for several years. In view of the acute hunger in many parts of the world and continuing population expansion, it is worth asking whether this is the moment for taking more productive American farmland out of cultivation.

Of late the successful Food for Peace plan has been encountering serious resistance. Wages in surplus foodstuffs have proved so popular among workers in sanitation, irrigation and other constructive projects overseas that greater amounts are sought for underdeveloped lands. But the Department of Agriculture says it should not be asked to bear the expenses involved in a program which is more a concern of the State Department.

This dispute points to a fact about which there can be little argument. America's food production in a predominantly hungry world is not simply a national concern. Good stewardship demands that until many other countries can provide adequately for themselves we must supply much of the deficiency out of our abundance. The stress now should be on feasible means of distributing the surplus food on hand and what we can produce. The converted grasslands, forests and recreation areas could come later.

Rights of the Accused

FOR MANY years now security and loyalty investigations have been an accepted part of American life. While one can hardly be overjoyed that they are so well imbedded, their necessity in many instances is undeniable. On the one hand, the government must have solid assurances that those employees engaged in sensitive matters involving national security are loyal citizens. On the other, for the sake of internal security, the government must keep track of clearly potential subversives.

The objections to such investigations, which wax and wane from one year to the next, rarely turn on the theoretical principles involved. Instead, the most frequently expressed criticism of the various security programs is that their methods often present a clear threat to civil liberties.

The most obvious threat lies in the fact that almost all decisions about a person's loyalty or his status as a security risk are made on the basis of confidential background reports. Invariably, these reports rely heavily on information supplied by friends, relatives or acquaintances of the person being investigated. In practically no instance is it now possible for a person under investigation to confront anyone who has made derogatory statements. On the contrary, nothing is more zealously guarded by a security agency than its sources of information. The dangers of unjust accusations inherent in such a procedure are patent.

For that reason the new State Department ruling on the issuing of passports to suspected Communists is a notable gain—in theory at least—for individual civil liberties. While the regulation calls for the barring of passports to Communist Party members, it provides that anyone accused of membership will have the right to confront and cross-examine the person or persons who made the accusation. The first provision of the regulation, the denying of passports to Party members, stems from the Supreme Court's recent upholding of the Internal Security Act of 1950. There is nothing surprising then about that part: the act makes it a criminal offense for a Party member to apply for a passport.

The provision for confrontation of a confidential informant, however, was something unexpected. One can hardly doubt that most security agencies will be unhappy with the ruling; nor that some Congressmen and ordinary citizens will see in the provision a danger to our security apparatus.

Although it is much too early to guess how the ruling will work out in practice—and that will be the decisive test—it seems a wise and just one to us. For the accused individual, it will provide the necessary opportunity to refute any false charges. One can hardly speak of civil liberties when such an opportunity is lacking. Even more, the ruling reflects in part at least a recognition that, in security investigations, an accused person is at the mercy of his accusers.

From the side of the security agencies, of course, the ruling is likely to result in some uncomfortable dilemmas. According to the regulation, a security agency can object to a passport being issued only if it is willing to make known its source of derogatory information. On the whole, this is a dilemma which is likely to favor the accused individual. If it does turn out that way, we think it a risk well worth taking.

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Birth Control Laws Again

IN ITS January 30th issue *Look* magazine adds one more to the long list of articles published on the Massachusetts and Connecticut birth control laws, this one written by senior editor Gereon Zimmerman. Reading the article on the present situation in Connecticut, I tried to imagine how it would strike me if I were not a Catholic. After I had finished, I almost wished I had not made the effort—the results were that bad, and not from any fault of the writer, either. (A birth control clinic, said a Catholic who insisted that the law be enforced, "is like a house of prostitution.")

The Catholic position on artificial contraception will never be popular, of course. And although we should always try to make Catholic positions as understandable to others as possible, this is all that can be done. There can be no question of changing Catholic teaching simply because it represents a "hard saying." But that is not the issue here.

What is at issue in Connecticut is a law that bars the dissemination or use of artificial contraceptives. The law itself dates back to 1879 and the crusading Anthony Comstock. Its spirit is that of nineteenth-century New England Protestantism.

Nonetheless, although Catholic leaders in both Massachusetts and Connecticut say little on the subject for publication, everyone concerned in the matter says that Catholic influence is primarily what keeps the laws from being repealed. And why this should be so remains a mystery to me and to many other Catholics.

The Catholic conviction that contraception by mechanical and chemical means is a violation of the natural law is well known—although I fear some of the popular explanations we have made for this position have been rather halting. But Catholic thinkers do not say that everything we believe to be immoral should therefore be a crime. Why then the determination to keep on the statute books laws which reflect more of a Protestant than a Catholic approach to morality and public law?

It is argued that Catholic leaders in the states affected fear their assent to repeal of these laws would give the impression that the Catholic position on artificial contraception had changed. I can understand the reasoning here, but I am unpersuaded by it. To me it does not seem overly difficult to make it plain that the Catholic position on the morality of artificial contraception remains unchanged, while at the same time explaining the traditional limitation on the scope of public law.

Another often-heard justification for standing pat has a more sociological flavor. Catholics in New England had their noses rubbed in the dirt by Yankee Protestants for a long, long time, this apologia has it; as a result they now enjoy being in a position to say "No" on something like repealing the birth control laws too much to give it up. But this, of course, is explanation, not justification. We all know how strong the traditional hostility is between Brahmin and Catholic in New England, but how long are the rest of us supposed to suffer while waiting for old wounds to heal?

This is an issue on which I feel strongly. One reason is that I know what a stumbling-block it is to those who are not Catholics. I cannot remember participating in any public meeting with a free-and-open question period in which the subject of Massachusetts and Connecticut did not come up. For many non-Catholics, it is obvious, this single issue has become symbolic of everything that stands between them and the Church. I, for one, think it is foolish for us to burden ourselves any longer with these relics of Puritan Comstockery.

The fundamental fact, I think, is that these are bad laws. Leaving aside everything else, the minimum public consensus required for good law is simply not present, and these statutes are not and cannot be enforced. Two officials of the Planned Parenthood League were recently arrested for violating the Connecticut law, but all reports are that contraceptives can be bought freely in drugstores in both states and that doctors prescribe and citizens practice birth control. The laws represent sheer formalism, and their consistent violation can only encourage contempt for all law.

To me, as one Catholic, the Connecticut law is particularly odious, since it makes a crime of not only the dissemination but the use of contraceptive material. To put it bluntly, I want to keep the state out of the bedroom. The marriage relationship is a personal and a sacred one, and this legislation gives powers to the State in an area where I am quite unwilling to grant it competence to say either yea or nay. This seems to me an obvious and serious danger, and I am unable to understand Catholics who do not see it.

Last year the Supreme Court refused to rule one way or the other on the constitutionality of the Connecticut law, on the grounds that it was in fact a dead letter. Now that the law has been invoked against the two Planned Parenthood officials, the matter is likely to end up on the High Court's calendar once more, and this time it is considered probable that the Connecticut law will be declared unconstitutional. At that point, perhaps, someone may be able to explain just what good has been accomplished by fighting to keep these laws on the books all these years. It will have to be someone else, though; it is beyond me. JAMES O'GARA

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Role of the Religious School

Federal Aid and Freedom

JUSTUS GEORGE LAWLER

AT THE TIME of the first Vatican Council, Archbishop Ullathorne wrote Newman that many of the bishops were anxious to re-affirm the principle that laymen should take second place to clergy in theological discussions. Ullathorne had the doctrinal pronouncements of Veuillot, Acton, and W. G. Ward in mind, but he was interested above all in maintaining that distinction between functions in the Church which had been obscured by the agitation for and against the proclamation of infallibility.

It is regrettable that a similar distinction could not have been invoked during the recent debates on federal aid to parochial schools or to parochial school children. Since the very existence of the Catholic educational system is based on a collective prudential judgment by the entire Catholic community—and not merely by the episcopate—and since there is nothing sacrosanct about the survival of this particular type of educational organization, and since, furthermore, the role of ecclesiastical authority in the formal schooling of the child is mediated by the parents on whom this task devolves directly, it would have been juridically justifiable and politically expedient to have had the laity assume the dominant part in initiating the necessary action, and in carrying it through according to the lights of their own state.

The hierarchy, of course, should have spoken out; but they should have spoken as informed advisors rather than as churchmen enunciating decrees. That in some cases they chose the latter course, that in some cases they implied the possibility of using their ecclesiastical power to launch reprisals against the proponents of federal aid to public education exclusively, was at the least —given the state of public opinion—imprudent, and at the most an exorbitant extension of their office. One does not assert this distinction of functions in order to dislodge the barbs of those critics who castigate the Catholic community as monolithic; it is certainly not a question of giving the lie to Protestants and Others, but rather of simply maintaining that equilibrium in our religious structure which is implicit in the very notion of a clergy and a laity.

However, I do not think one should be too hasty in assigning episcopal directives—as has been done by much of the popular press—as the motive for the obstructionist tactics of such Catholic Congressmen as Representative Delaney. In fact, anyone who reads the speeches of this Congressman cannot but be impressed by their reasoned character and their patriotic rather than their sectarian tone: "The existence of a free society is conditioned upon the existence of unshackled individuals with differing views and different approaches. Diversity is the quintessence of democracy. Uniformity is the hallmark of totalitarianism. . . . The tragedy here lies in the fact that proponents of strictly public aid rely upon extra-constitutional slogans that have no relation to the real issue at hand—and that issue is whether we shall maintain in our national life that measure of diversity which is so essential to democratic survival." (*Congressional Record*, August 10, 1961, A6257.)

THE ARGUMENT for the creation of a truly pluralist educational order is, I believe, the strongest which can be brought forth in defense of the general Catholic position. Pro or con views based on constitutional law are usually of secondary value, and occasionally of little merit at all, save in the scoring of debating points. And those Catholics who argue so eloquently and persuasively on constitutional grounds must admit in the end that the question of precedents is itself so controverted, and that precedents have so often been completely reversed—as in the case of "separate but equal" facilities—that any decision on constitutionality must await the action of the Court on a bill which has already been passed. Antecedent to the passage of such a bill, those who advocate federal aid, whether direct or indirect to the school or to the pupil, must establish their claims on a present need of the society and on a living tradition of political science, rather than on a constitutional or legalistic literalism.

The requirements of a genuine pluralism, it seems to me, dissipate the arguments of those opposed to federal

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aid to private schools. The legal argument is largely irrelevant, even when set forth by the President; since it is not for the President, save as a private citizen, to anticipate the judgment of the Court. However, it is precisely in its treatment of the requisites for a pluralist society that the present Administration seems to be guilty of an unconscious duplicity. On the one hand, we have the determining of the amount of funds to be distributed to the states on the basis of the student population of *all* schools, and the exclusion of those very Catholic students who went to swell the total figure from receiving any of the aid; this can only result in the expansion of public, to the detriment of private education. And on the other hand, we have Commissioner McMurrin telling his audience at Harvard on July 20: "Without genuine diversity in the foundations of our culture the life of our society would lose much of its personal character and would take on the dull mechanized quality that is so characteristic of life in the totalitarian states."

YET I think no one will question that with the gradual secularization of public schools over the past hundred years there has been a drift towards an enforced orthodoxy, and that notwithstanding the guarantees of local control and the statements of such professional bodies as the American Council on Education that, "we reject secularism as a philosophy of life," this tendency towards uniformity is going to continue. The only way in which this drift can be effectively thwarted is by the development of vigorous private school systems. It is true that one must take into account the earnestness with which the majority of teachers in public schools attempt to assert in their teaching spiritual values while avoiding any kind of sectarian instruction; but it is equally true that in spite of the good will of these teachers, a common unitary standard does tend to prevail in public education, and that this standard is gradually smothering the seeds of any germinating pluralism.

This is apparent in the very terms used to decry the Catholic school system: the most common criticism is that it is divisive. And given the present fabric of our society, one can only agree. If we continue our present line of growth we are going to have two immense educational orders in America, each of which will create its own climate of ideas and its own tenor of attitudes, and each of which will find it increasingly difficult to communicate with the other. In the future even more than in the present we shall have not a pluralist but a dualist society, and we shall encounter more and more the kind of venomous eruptions which exploded throughout France after passage of the Barangé law in 1951, and which have burst to the surface periodically in the public life of Belgium and Holland.

In America at this time, unfortunately, the phrase "private education" is very close to being a euphemism for "Catholic education." And this points up a social evil which ought to be corrected not in the name of denominationalism, but in the name of pluralism. What is basic, if we are going to preserve the kind of polity envisioned embryonically in the letters patent of our national birthright, is the development through public money by sectarian groups of educational systems which can meet the requirements of the community as a whole. (This would in no way abridge the Constitution, since what that document was concerned with was "an establishment" of religion: a term which meant a century and a half ago what it still means in England today: an official religion of the land.) With such highly diversified educational systems, paralleling the public school system, we would have the social instruments for realizing within the framework of a single and unified tradition a multiplicity of opposing and conforming views, the common refraction of which would color the whole of our national life.

Professor Oscar Handlin in the *Catholic World* and in *Commentary* (July, 1961) has inquired as to "who is to set the standard of adequacy?" for schools that will receive government assistance. His answer is, regrettably, neither very comprehensive nor very perceptive. In his *Catholic World* article he replies: "Already the states have gone far, too far, in establishing requisites of instruction; and the resultant damage has only been mitigated by inefficiencies in enforcement." In *Commentary* he is even more explicit: "There can only be one answer—the government." This does not seem to me a readily verifiable statement, since it is a matter of record that the criteria established by the various professional bodies throughout the country have been much more rigorous than those defined by state boards of public instruction. But why exhume the ubiquitous monster of state control? The obvious answer to Professor Handlin's question is that the regional accrediting agencies, composed for many years now of educators from all types of schools, public, parochial, private-neutral, and private-sectarian, constitute the best qualified organizations to assess the academic merits of a school.

It is in the detailed articulation of a program for establishing a large number of private school systems that we have much to learn from the experience of other countries. In Germany, Belgium, and Holland, where there are two major denominations, and in those five of the ten Canadian provinces—with the exception of Newfoundland—which provide tax support for confessional schools, the situation is so different from that in this country, with our much wider diversity of religious bodies, that it could have little bearing on any practical scheme for fostering denominational education here. But in Great Britain, where there is a comparable range of religious affiliation, formulas have

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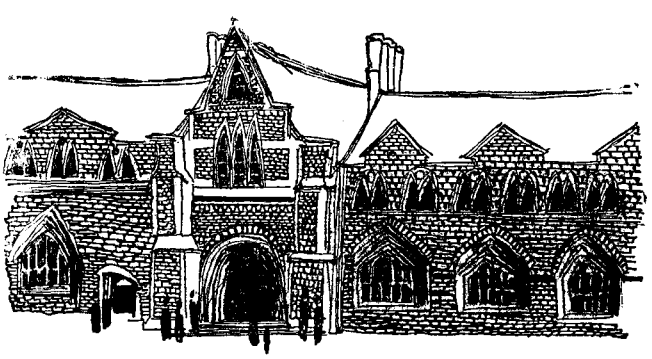
been worked out that might partially guide us in correcting the current maladjustment. This is one of the lessons brought out with great thoroughness and exhaustive scholarship in a recent book by Benjamin Sacks, *The Religious Issue in the State Schools of England and Wales: 1902-1914* (University of New Mexico Press. $5.). The problem in England and Wales was to guarantee flourishing sectarian and private schools for those who could sustain them with government assistance, and to make such schools an integral part of the community where they were located.

Since Catholic education in this country is so firmly established that it would be impossible for various other denominations to develop their own systems proportionate to the needs of their members, some method will have to be devised to achieve parity. Professor Sacks points out that in England and Wales an equitable arrangement was attempted in the nineteenth century by allowing the religious bodies a period of grace in which "to build schools in deficient districts at the expense of the State. But thereafter national grants for construction would cease, albeit annual appropriations for maintenance would continue to be dispensed." The situation in England after the last war is even more pertinent to the issues flowing from the type of nation-wide sectarian educational scheme desiderated above. For the reconstruction of schools the government was to bear the entire cost if the school would consent to be managed by a board, two-thirds of whose members were appointed by the local authority and one-third by the religious denomination; the state would bear one-half the cost of reconstruction if two-thirds of the places on the board were held by members of the religious denomination.

These are not necessarily financial arrangements that could be applied directly in this country; but they indicate the type of adjustment that can be made if there is a sincere search for a broad national policy, and a sincere effort to constrict prejudice. However, because in the immediate present there is only a limited amount of money available, whether through state or federal agencies, and since Catholics already have a well-established school system, one would hope that they would dismiss their current claims with a view to freeing by such a gesture—and it would be only a gesture, though a gesture of great significance—funds for other denominational schools.



IT WAS understandably difficult for non-Catholics to avoid the impression some months ago that Catholics—at least as their views were represented by certain of their spokesmen—were willing to jeopardize any federal assistance to education if their own schools were not included. To the degree that this attitude stemmed from purely religious considerations it revealed a culpable prejudice against public education, and an inability to transcend sectarian loyalties and make sacrifices for the common good. In the face of such narrow intransigence it would seem naive to expect from Catholics the type of abnegation I have spoken of, in which they would temporarily set aside their claims in order that other denominations might develop their own schools. But it should be remembered that the statements threatening extinction for any federal aid bill did not necessarily represent the views of Catholics as a whole, nor were they the product of any profound political philosophy of pluralism. In this latter sense they were the pardonable effort of one of many pressure-groups to lobby for its own special interests. Such a strategy may have been inexpedient and imprudent —emanating as it did from a segment of society which was demanding public moneys on the basis of the common good—but it was not outside the norms of sanctioned procedure for influencing legislation.

Looking in retrospect at the controversy over aid to private schools, one feels that both sides could have been more candid. Catholic educators could have acknowledged that they were willing to give up some autonomy, that they were, for instance, open to allowing a board of education or of lay trustees a greater voice in the purely academic affairs of their institutions. They could have acknowledged, at least intramurally, that the financial difficulties of Catholic schools were to some degree the result of causes which utterly eclipsed the economic sphere.

The major critical area in Catholic education is the teacher shortage; Catholic school superintendents are willing to accept loans or grants for construction and other needs, largely because they know that money will thus be freed for salaries. But this personnel problem is related directly and inescapably to the shortage of religious vocations, and can only be adequately understood in the light of those imponderable factors which may inhibit the spiritual and liturgical life of the entire Catholic community. It might even be suggested that the present agitation for federal aid on the part of a growing and economically flourishing Catholic population is indicative of a decline in religious vigor from that earlier period when Catholic schools were founded by an impoverished minority, and when religious vocations were proportionate to their needs. No

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one has a right to oversimplify extremely complicated sociological realities, but it should go without saying that certain aspects of Catholic social life are radicated in the spiritual rather than in the temporal order.

ON THE other hand, it would have cleared the air if non-Catholics had acknowledged that to a considerable degree their opposition was motivated not by constitutional concerns, but by prejudice—whether in part justifiable or not—against the allegedly growing power of Catholicism. When the National Lutheran Council, meeting in February, 1960, passed a resolution that "Government aid for the construction of church-operated schools at the elementary level is clearly a form of tax support for sectarian instruction," the impression to be created was that these particular churches were exercised primarily over questions of constitutionality. This may be the case—since on neither side of the controversy are the issues simply black or white—but I think such seemingly patriotic admonitions may be understood more fully in the light of a recently published work, A. H. Jahsmann's *What's Lutheran in Education?* The author notes that many "Lutherans frankly fear the additional power that state support of church schools would give to the Roman Catholic Church in America and the problem of preventing this aggressive church from demanding more than its share of state support."

A similar prejudice underlies, I suspect, the recurrent analogies that have obscured this question. For example, Leo Pfeffer, General Counsel for the American Jewish Congress, draws a much-quoted parallel between the demand for federal aid by Catholics and problems arising in certain communities over water fluoridation: "It would undoubtedly be a great expense for Christian Scientists living in communities with a fluoridated water supply to purchase unfluoridated water as required by their consciences. Yet I have not come across a single report of a demand by Christian Scientists that the government give them money so that they can buy such water and thus be economically able to exercise their freedom of religion." (*Current History*, August, 1961.)

The analogy falters on two points, however. First although it has been maintained by conservative political theorists, Friedrich Hayek for example, that private agencies are as able to provide individual localities with such services as water and sewerage disposal, the generally accepted assumption is that the local or the national government can more effectively preside over such necessary common tasks. But—and this is the cardinal issue—no such assumption in favor of public education over private education has ever been underwritten by our laws. Second, most communities charge a fee for the particular service rendered; this fee is not a tax, but the purchase price of a commodity over the sale of which the government exercises a monopoly. If I as a farmer prefer to generate my own electric power rather than purchase it from the government or from a private corporation, or if I as a Christian Scientist pump water from my own well, I can hardly be expected to honor a bill from some third party. Of course, I may be indirectly taxed for such governmental services; but Catholics are not complaining that *some* of their money goes to support the public schools; they are grieved that *none* of it goes to their own schools. The sad truth is that Mr. Pfeffer's fables presume that private schools are not really schools at all—fortunately whether they are or they are not is a determination to be made by educators and not by constitutional lawyers.

AN ILLUSTRATION more enlightening than Mr. Pfeffer's might run as follows. If a compulsory medical aid bill were passed, and a Christian Scientist were taken ill, the courts might uphold the state's refusal to pay for his visit to a practitioner, on the grounds that by common consensus the ministrations of the practitioner were not comparable to those of a doctor of medicine. Although the individual who is ill may subjectively be convinced that the benefits to be derived from visiting a practitioner are greater than those to be derived from visiting a doctor, the objective norm of the community would probably say they are not.

Now Catholics have not asked that the private institutions which they finance, and which they—through an extreme accommodation of the word—call "schools," should be supported by public moneys; they have maintained that any objective standard used to define a school should be the norm for all institutions claiming that title. Catholics are willing to have their schools conform to whatever academic requirements are imposed by the various regional accrediting agencies or by the state boards of education. Catholics view their institutions as schools, as schools with an added element; as schools in which religion is an active principle; they believe that this enhances rather than negates their character as schools—and this belief far from being subjective has been statistically certified in Joseph H. Fichter's *Parochial School*, and in Peter and Alice Rossi's important study in *Daedalus*, Spring, 1961.

One could extend the analogy with a medical aid bill yet further: if I am ill I can buy a bottle of snake oil and demand that the government reimburse me, I can consult a medical doctor, or I can avail myself of the services of an osteopath. The only role of the government is to decide, by accepting the judgments of qualified experts, which of these agents or instruments conduces to health. Mr. Pfeffer's imagery would pair the Catholic educational institution with a case of Hadacol—this is not the kind of case one would expect an eminent lawyer such as Mr. Pfeffer to be handling.

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Reading Maketh a Full Child

A Word for McGuffey

JOHN WHITNEY EVANS

IN RECENT months two interesting cases arose in the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin, both involving the question of academic freedom in the public schools. In one case, occurring at the small oil refining town of Wrenshall, Minnesota, a high school English teacher was fired for requiring his college-bound students to read Orwell's *1984*. In the Wisconsin case, the school board at tiny Twin Lakes was censured by the Kenosha County School Superintendent for ordering the use of McGuffey's *Eclectic Readers* "either as basic textbooks or supplementary readers."

The Wrenshall explosion was something of a misfire. The local board condemned *1984* as "obscene" and having "too much sex content." One of the five members had read the book; the other four "skimmed through portions of it during a board meeting." The teacher, Mr. Richard C. Wyman, refused to remove the book from his reading list and was discharged for insubordination.

A few days later the mother of one of the senior boys circulated a petition asking for Mr. Wyman's reinstatement. After a meeting involving representatives of the State Board of Education and the local school board, a compromise suitable to both sides was worked out. Mr. Wyman agreed that the school board of his district had the right to determine policy. But in this case, it was in turn decided, that policy placed *1984* on the list of suggested readings. The board rehired the teacher, a father of eleven children, and no further rumbles have been heard.

The Wisconsin affair was of much larger magnitude. It stirred a greater cloud of issues, and quakes were felt even after a sort of compromise plan was worked out.

The use of McGuffey was originally objected to by Raymond Oestreich, the principal of Lakeland Elementary School, his superintendent, and many persons in the community, on three counts. First, the *Readers* are not organized according to scientific principles of reading instruction; second, the selections are "almost totally unrelated to modern living"; third, the books inculcate sectarian, i.e., Protestant, religion.

After each of these aspects of the matter had been raised several times in the context of ever-warming argument, and after the lethal threat to withdraw state aid was interjected, State Schools Superintendent Angus Rothwell finally gave "grudging approval" of the *Readers* as supplementary materials representative of "the work of well accepted classic writers of early America"; McGuffey, however, was not to be used to teach reading skills. But early in November it became clear that all was not yet over when Principal Oestreich refused to permit the use of the *Readers* and was suspended by the Twin Lakes school board.

BOTH of these cases merit analysis on several levels. As noted, both are cases which involve academic freedom. Intimately connected with this issue is that of parental rights in public education. Does a teacher or principal have the right to form and carry out an educational policy which is not approved by his school board and, presumably, by the parents he serves? Have parents the right to pressure a duly constituted board for a reversal of rulings?

Each of these matters deserves careful thought, not only in view of local circumstances but with reference to our national educational commitments. But there is still another aspect to these cases, one which was visible on the educational horizon a long time before these two blasts thrust it into prominence. Both McGuffey and Orwell have significance for America because each furthered an important literary tradition. Futhermore, in the light of present educational practice, *1984* and the *Eclectic Readers* bear, at one point, an intriguing relationship to each other.

Orwell stands at the bitter heart of that pessimistic group of authors who have described what Erich Fromm has called the "negative utopias." Despite what the nineteenth century may have pretended to offer humanity through its evolutionary assumptions and technological promises, such writers as H. G. Wells in *War of the Worlds* and *The Time Machine*, Jules Verne in *Robur the Conqueror* and the Captain Nemo tales, and Jack London in *The Iron Heel* were not entirely convinced that the future of men in a technocratic society was quite so rosy. Their most despairing moments, however, never bottomed out at the depths of *angst* entered by Huxley in *Brave New World* and Orwell in *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Mr. Wyman was ob-

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viously of the opinion that his young people could profit from being exposed to some of this drab, questioning literature.

It seems beyond quibble that the literary heritage involved is in itself a worthwhile one, whatever its gloomy content might disclose. It seems equally beyond dispute that the proportion of the Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban experiences gives this somber tradition an urgent relevancy, and in my own experience with high school students I have seen how a reading of Orwell can whet the desire to explore and refute the premises of atheistic collectivism.

But, as Erich Fromm points out, one need not look even to nearby Cuba for the significance of *1984*. There are blatant conformist and dehumanizing elements at work in uncontrolled industrialism and merchandizing and throughout the constriction patterns of the exurbs. These give Orwell's book a special meaning for the United States which is certainly relevant to the entire controversy .

WHERE Orwell comments upon the decay of utopian premises, McGuffey stands at the center of a literary tradition that labored to bring about the millennium. With a zeal similar to the educational messianism of Horace Mann and the energetic crusading of William Torrey Harris, William Holmes McGuffey set out to teach generations of children that good was good, bad was bad, and that each would be rewarded accordingly.

From 1836 until about 1900, McGuffey's books sold well over one hundred million copies. During the middle fifty years of the nineteenth century, it is estimated, nearly half the school children of the United States learned kindness to animals from "Mary Had a Little Lamb," the evils of false alarms from "The Wolf," the folly of vanity from "The Spider and the Fly." Even today lines from his readers are quoted by Americans as unconsciously as phrases from Shakespeare.

And did McGuffey's moralizing volumes achieve their purpose? It has been said that if a list of authors most often referred to by lawyers arguing before the Supreme Court were to be compiled, McGuffey would head it. Some have convincingly advanced the thesis that the sparks ignited by the Populists and Progressivists in the last years of the nineteenth century were able to blaze into beacons of reform only because of the social tinder heaped up by the *Eclectic Readers*. Mark Sullivan, seconded by many, has not hesitated to conclude that "McGuffey, in short, because of the leverage of his readers, had a large part in the forming of the mind of America."

It has been argued with equal vigor, of course, that McGuffey reflected, rather than formed, the American mind. In an age of simple piety, goodness for the sake of temporal reward, optimistic belief in the power of education to perfect human nature, he answered a social need. At a time when public education was largely a Protestant affair, he supplied lessons based upon theological assumptions and containing portions of the Scriptures acceptable to all involved.

But the point remains. McGuffey was in a significant literary tradition. Perhaps his black and white moralizing no longer equips children to meet the complexities of our age. Perhaps, as the Twin Lakes School Board believes, words such as "God" must be taped over even though the ideas derived from this Reality must not be obscured. Nevertheless, McGuffey argued that good ultimately will be rewarded because it is good; that evil will never gain the ultimate triumph; that one must be pursued and the other shunned precisely because of what each is. And this is a tradition which no nation can amputate from its education without at the same time cutting out part of its own substance.

McGuffey can be appreciated simply on literary grounds, however, apart from any moralizing orientation. One can find Wordsworth in the *Third Reader;* Longfellow and Hawthorne in the *Fourth Reader;* Whittier, Goldsmith, Irving, Shakespeare, Daniel Webster, Lowell, Dickens, and Tennyson in the *Fifth Reader;* and all of these plus Scott, Poe, and Byron are to be discovered in the *Sixth Reader.*

There is no quarrel over the fact that these authors are beyond many of the children at present attending our grade schools. They are not, however, too much for some of these youngsters. Yet an examination of today's text books will reveal that even the pupils who could profit from a contact with such authors have scant chance to do so.

It is argued, in defense of this dearth of literary content in our readers, that the words used by authors such as those McGuffey included are beyond the reach of modern youngsters. Therefore, it is further argued, the grand ideas they expressed are also out of reach. It is precisely at this point that *1984* and McGuffey meet in a crucial relationship.

THOSE who have read *1984* will remember the function of that department in Orwell's "Ministry of Truth" concerned with the process of compilation (or, rather, deletion) involved in the preparation of the "Newspeak Dictionary."

"You haven't a real appreciation of Newspeak, Winston," (Syme) said almost sadly. "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? . . . Every concept that will be needed will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten . . . . Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller." And with the restricting of awareness was to come the limitation of individuality, until all men were one in Big Brother.

There is, I submit, a distressing similarity between the

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Newspeak Dictionary and the popular word lists used by the editors and publishers of readers for our schools —vocabulary guides which are highly selective, containing only those words which scientific investigation supposes pupils of a certain age and background are ready to learn and comprehend. Thorndyke's *Teacher's Word Book,* for example, lists 30,000 words to which it is assumed pupils may salubriously be exposed, and suggests at what level each word may be introduced most efficiently. The Rinsland list published in 1945 offers a similar treatment of 14,571 words. Robert Seashore has estimated that the typical reading series in our schools, drawing from these and other word lists, leads a pupil to about 500 new words each year.

It should be obvious that such verbal filtering has made it virtually impossible to write selections for school children which have any literary merit. Many parents have become only too familiar with the watered, mashed, and parboiled fare repetitiously strained out for their children. No one will deny that a common core of words is needed for effective communication. But it is equally true that only the judicious combining of common with rich, uncommon words makes it possible for a writer to communicate most effectively. How else is he to share with his reader the exciting experiences of nuance, emphasis, discrimination, color, awareness? And, from the point of view of education, how else is a writer to awaken in the reader a realization of intellectual things, and stimulate an ever heightening power to comprehend reality and conceptualize it?

Machines could have written many of our present-day readers. And that brings us back to *1984* again.

IN ALL FAIRNESS, it must be said that the educationist's vocabulary lists are not really Newspeak. They are intended to prepare for literature, not suppress it. In the past decade, too, they have been growing longer instead of shorter, as more recent research has demonstrated that the earlier word lists were unrealistic.

About fifteen years ago, for example, Seashore and Mary K. Smith studied the use of words among students in three public schools. They found that the "typical" first-grader knew 23,500 words. The youngsters in fifth grade had a recognition vocabulary of 51,000 words. The average ninth-grader could comprehend 62,000 words, and a senior was able to recognize 80,000 of the vernacular's 700,000 words.

This research has been repeated on two occasions with substantially the same results. Burleigh H. Shildes concluded in 1959 that first-graders enjoy "apparently a much larger understanding vocabulary than has been previously estimated." In 1951 Cynthia Colvin argued that it was time for educators to stop telling children how many words they should know, and to start preparing readers on the basis of the large number of words children in reality did know. Seashore, in fact, estimated that the average child, in spite of his reading lessons, learned about 5,000 words each year.

One would think that the publishers of readers would take note of these findings. Unfortunately, a perusal of many readers currently being used in our schools reveals that nothing of the sort has been done.

A first-grade reader published in 1953, for instance, introduces the child to sixty-six new words if the pre-reader has been mastered; this book devotes 105 pages to the presentation of no new words. A series published in 1954 indicates that the fifth-grader will be given the opportunity to learn 735 new words. A popular 1957 reader has a vocabulary which is "carefully selected and controlled," and permits the first-grader to discover 182 new words. The sixth-grade reader in this series provides for the "controlled introduction of 767 new words." A reader published in 1958 tells the sixth-grade teacher that the child must know (only) 2,100 basic words in order to master the 755 new ones to be presented.

Looking at this deplorable situation from another vantage, almost twenty years ago C. De Witt Boney and Julia Lynch concluded that to introduce one new word for every twenty-six running words was a high load; and that to confront a first-grader with one new word for every ten running words was not a load so heavy as to have an effect on success in reading. Yet a series of readers published in 1960 boasts that its first-grade book offers one new word for every seventy-three running words. And a *sixth-grade reader* published four years ago proclaimed that "no group of 200 running words has more than six new words."

What is being argued against here is not the attempt to teach American children of all talents and backgrounds how to read. What is being attacked is the clinical standardization of learning, the *de facto* anti-intellectualism enshrined in our approach to reading.

McGuffey obviously would have no welcome in the world of *1984,* but it is disturbing to realize that he is already rejected, and not on grounds of piety. McGuffey is no longer wanted even for the advanced among our children. They cannot read him because we have tolerated in our time the imposition of a sort of scientistic totalitarianism in our reading programs.

We have permitted word-counts, the abridged dictionary, electronic sorters, and the bell-shaped curve to edit our writing for children. And this in turn has suppressed the talents and limited the desires of millions of our young people, and has snatched from them one of life's most precious opportunities to be themselves.

The reading of literature, the barking of mental shins against craggy new words, the confrontation of eager young minds with compassionate mature minds—these make for a full man. Until our grade-school readers regain some of the literary fullness of the *Eclectic Readers,* we shall continue to graduate inert customers for Orwell's Newspeak stands.

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A Story

Miss Agnew

JACK MATTHEWS

WHEN MISS AGNEW stood behind her desk she could rest her hands comfortably on the top without bending her thick body. There wasn't a student in her class she didn't have to look up to. Walking down an aisle, her massive hips, swaddled in thick woolens, almost brushed the desks on each side. Sometimes she would bump a student's arm or shoulder, but she never said "Excuse me." She was used to bumping into things; it was part of her life.

Miss Agnew was our English teacher. As short and squat as she was, she had a magnificent voice, ranging from a warbling, virgin soprano when she read Juliet to a jaunty, resounding baritone for Mercutio. She waved her thick arms and pounded the oak desk, making her bracelets jangle. The students didn't understand her, though, any more than they understood Shakespeare.

Usually, Miss Agnew wore an expensive tweed suit, with a skirt so long it almost brushed the tops of the men's high-topped working shoes she wore to comfort her aching feet and brace her overloaded ankles. Her hair was like cotton candy, sticking out all over her head, and its color was a dark, unhealthy orange, suggestive of spun, dried blood.

Miss Agnew wanted her students to become writers. "There's no reason some of you can't be geniuses!" she'd say, clapping her hands to get the attention of the boys ignoring her in the back of the room. *"Write a story!"*

Saying this, she'd waddle back into the old-fashioned cloakroom at the rear. Most of the students would grin at one another and start talking. Soon, we'd smell cigarette smoke and see clouds of it come billowing out from the cloakroom entrances. Once I went back to ask a question during one of these sessions and found her huddled in the chair she kept back there, her eyes vacant, while she puffed mightily on her second cigarette, which she held squarely in the center of her mouth.

Usually, Miss Agnew gave the class ten minutes to write a story—at the end of which she would collect half a dozen papers (from a class of forty) and fold them once to put into her notebook. She never returned these papers, and the fact that most of the students didn't even bother to write a story seemed to have no effect on their grades.

The simple presence of a student in her class, plus the merest display of attention, was sure to bring at least a B from Miss Agnew. She couldn't bear to flunk her pupils—even the loud ruffians at the back, whose attention she was always trying to get by rapidly clapping her hands. They repaid her by mimicking her behind her back (*oh, Romeo*) and actually following her down the aisles between the seats, waddling in different versions of her movements. Possibly she didn't hear them, but probably she simply pretended not to. At any rate, she behaved with great dignity and continued to lecture or quote from Shakespeare, pausing only rarely to clap her hands at the turmoil around her.

I DESPISED the crude jokes two or three of the other boys played on Miss Agnew. Among other things, I also despised the boys themselves. They were, I was convinced, ignorant louts—uncertain, adolescent and horribly snobbish. Furthermore, I sympathized in some ambiguous way with Miss Agnew. I felt that, in the final sense of values, we stood for the same things. At the same time her grotesqueries embarrassed me. Sometimes I turned and glared at the oafs in back. Sometimes I had to laugh.

The significant thing was, I can see now, that I really belonged with them. In fact, two of them were club brothers of mine. At any rate, an idea eventually came to me that I couldn't resist and the next time Miss Agnew asked us to write a story, I copied a whole paragraph from Thomas Wolfe. It was one of his most lyrical outbursts, and when I handed the paper to Miss Agnew I saw her glance at it and then continue reading, almost against her will, while she struggled, erect and slow, to her desk.

She read the whole thing, while paper wads flew and everyone talked out loud. For the first time, I became alarmed. Miss Agnew's eyes were gleaming. We had all seen her cry over poems, and it was one of the greatest jokes on her that she could be so moved by a bunch of words on a page.

Finally, she clapped her hands until the room became a little quieter. *"I want to read something to you,"* she said in a hollow voice.

Miss Agnew did not exactly read the paper—she re-

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cited it. She would read a phrase silently, close her eyes and chant it, then search with her finger for where she had left off.

Several students turned and looked at me quizzically. I understood then that what I had done was not a joke, because poor, foolish Miss Agnew could have been deceived by anyone. She yearned to trust her students, especially the quieter ones. Furthermore, a joke has to be shared, and at this very moment I determined miserably not to tell anyone.

FROM THAT MOMENT on, Miss Agnew watched me closely. I did not write anything for her for a while, and passing my desk she would pause and stare at me with what I took to be an expression of tragic disappointment on her face.

And then one day, when she told the class to write, she asked me to come back into the cloak room with her. She settled herself into her chair, crossed one heavy shoe over the other, and lighted a cigarette.

"Do you know who you reminded me of in that paper a while back?" she asked.

"Who?"

She exhaled grandly and shook her head sideways. "Thomas Wolfe. There was a quality of Thomas Wolfe in the writing."

I didn't say anything.

"Have you ever thought of being a writer?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said.

"Well . . ." she tapped her cigarette and ashes fell onto the hem of her skirt and the men's working shoes. "Well," she said, "I want you to keep on writing. I think you have *something to say.*"

I was silent.

"You haven't written anything in class lately," she said.

"No," I said, "I guess not."

Another pause.

"Do you have a girl friend?"

"No."

"Oh, that's a shame!" she said.

My head seemed to float. She was puffing cigarette smoke into my face at a furious pace now. I heard the class talking wildly. Somebody was banging a seat up and down. Several girls were laughing shrilly.

"It's a tragedy not to love," Miss Agnew said.

THE SEATS in Miss Agnew's room were double seats, so that we all sat in pairs. The next day, Miss Agnew had me change seats with a girl nearer the front of the room, so that I was sitting beside another girl, named Patty Brennaman.

Patty was a quiet girl with long wavy hair and clear blue eyes. She wrote with a fountain pen in an amazingly neat hand and she dotted her i's with small, perfect circles.

When I moved my books to the desk beside her, several of the boys in back hooted. Miss Agnew clapped her hands rapidly, and Patty blushed and stared at her pen, which she was turning slowly in her hand.

I was probably blushing myself, for I had always considered Patty the prettiest girl in the room. We both sat there in mute misery, painfully conscious of what Miss Agnew intended, for she was as romantic as an adolescent and we understood her and were embarrassed for her. She spoke out things that were too precious for speaking and haunted us deep in our hearts.

SEVERAL WEEKS passed, and I still would not write anything in class. The day arrived when Miss Agnew told the class to write and she beckoned me to follow her back into the cloakroom.

She lighted her cigarette and stared at me. Finally, she said: *"Don't you want to create? What's happened to you?"*

"I don't know," I said.

"You need a girl," she said.

I turned my head away from her.

"Don't you like Patty?"

"I don't know," I said.

Silence.

"I mean, sure," I said; "she's all right."

"Don't you know, you can't live without loving? Don't you know that?"

I looked at this ugly woman, now breathing smoke out of her nose. Her feet were wide apart and she was resting her elbows on her knees. Her body was like a thick, upholstered chair all warped out of shape.

"Loneliness is terrible," she said. "Not even pride can make up for it."

She withdrew her cigarette and grimaced, slapping her open palms on her knees, but still holding the cigarette between two fingers. Then she recited in a loud, yearning voice:

O! never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify.

Talk roared like a wild fire in the classroom, and several boys were whistling "The Monkey Wrapped His Tail Around the Flag Pole" in unison.

Then Miss Agnew stared at me for a moment. I blushed fiercely, and started to stammer something—I don't know what.

"Don't you have any conception of what it is to love, to yearn?" she asked gently.

I lowered my face and burned. I wished she would drop dead. She didn't have any right to be so goofy looking and so damned silly.

I heard her shoes squeak, and I looked up to see her standing at the entrance to the cloak room. Her unstamped cigarette lay on the floor, still burning. She was clapping her hands furiously, with tears in her eyes. But nobody seemed to hear her.

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THE STAGE

Williams As Phoenix

BY NOW it should be clear that Tennessee Williams' real subject is the painfulness (not the tragedy) of existence, and the fate of human dignity (not of the soul) in the face of suffering. It should also be clear that however neurotic Williams himself may be and however widely neurosis enters into and affects his work, there is little point in looking for the roots of his art, and less in searching out the meaning of any particular play, on one or another categorical Freudian plot of ground; because to Williams *everything* is painful—sexuality, touch, communication, time, the bruteness of fact, the necessity to lie, the loss of innocence. And finally it should be clear that toward his material Williams has alternately been elegist, soothsayer, myth-maker, immolator, exorcist or consoler—none of the incarnations final and no one incarnation carried through to finality.

Unfortunately, nothing is clear. The state of Williams criticism is a jungle, in which every hot opinion flourishes. You may find the three or four or seven critics you most respect each sending up a different species of leaf. No American playwright, except possibly O'Neill, has been so much praised or damned for the wrong reasons, just as none has so successfully (and to the exacerbation of the problem) straddled the popular and elite camps. And no playwright has so helped to muddy his work's image by coyness, obfuscatory pronouncements, false modesty and inability to accept that when you eat the cake it is gone.

Thus Williams' new play came to us and was greeted with the familiar irrelevancies and extraneous considerations, and the familiar embarrassment. It was dismal to read his breast-beating acceptance of the Chicago critics' unfavorable notices. (The Chicago critics indeed! Can anyone imagine Brecht, O'Casey, Giradoux or even O'Neill deferring to Claudia Cassidy?) And now that the supreme court has reversed the verdict, what has the playwright to say? What, for that matter, does the new verdict, the New York talk, have to tell us about "The Night of the Iguana?"

The talk is that the play is Williams' best since "Cat on A Hot Tin Roof," and the talk, for once, is right. But it seems doubtful that it is right for the best reasons or that it tells the whole story. In the general eagerness to rediscover a humane or optimistic or elegaic or non-apocalyptic Williams, the Williams of "Streetcar" and "The Glass Menagerie," two things have mostly been ignored. The first is that "The Night of the Iguana" perpetuates nearly all of Williams' failings as a dramatist; the other is that the renewal, the moving up from the depths of "Sweet Bird" and "Period of Adjustment," is precisely of a kind to throw light on what those weakness are.

Essentially, it is the never-settled dilemma of what kind of playwright to be. The problem divides here into three. The decor: a detailed, exact reproduction of a seedy Mexican hotel near Acapulco, circa 1940; realism at the zenith (flakiness of walls, lushness of vegetation, *real* rain), yet also attempts at "poetic" atmosphere, suggestions of symbolic values. The text: an amalgam of hard realism, expert and winning, and sloppy lyricism; the dialogue used conflictingly to advance the plot or create character or establish vision or as abstract self-sufficiency. The structure: two nearly separate plays, a first act of tedious naturalism filled with supererogation and subsidiary characters of strictly commercial lineage (a Nazi family, a lesbian, Mexican boys lounging darkly); and a second wherein much is stripped away and a long central anecdote with its attendant effects rests securely on a base of true feeling and dramatic rightness.

The anecdote, neither so long nor nearly so shocking as that in "Suddenly Last Summer," but having much the same purpose, to establish and compel assent to the play's central difficult proposition, is only partly detached from the main flow of action, struggling to issue from it, correct it, illuminate it and give it permanence. It is an example of what Williams does best, as so much of the earlier business exemplifies what he does worst.

Told by a forty-year-old woman who has lived a life of celibacy while shepherding, on a nomadic, Vachel Lindsay-like existence, her aged grandfather, a minor poet who will read his work for coins and is fighting against failing powers to complete his last mysterious poem, a prayer for courage, the story constitutes a revelatory experience to set against the despair over the inexorability of erotic compulsion with which the play is otherwise largely concerned. There is a possibility that it would lose much of its splendor without the incandescent purity of Margaret Leighton's performance as the woman, but one tends to think that it would be hard to destroy.

What is so new in it, and in the play, for Williams, is the announcement of chastity as a possibility, as well as unromantic pity for the sensually driven. For the man to whom it is told, and who exists on the stage as wound for Miss Leighton's ministrations and arena for her victory (sadly, he is played unclearly and with spurious force by Patrick O'Neal), is an Episcopalian priest who has been defrocked for committing "fornication and heresy in the same week" and has become a tourist guide in Mexico, where he maintains an unbroken line of lust and self-pity.

At the play's end he is not healed nor are his circumstances altered—his last act is in fact to accept ruefully his condition, marked out for him by the person of the female hotel-owner, a woman of absolute appetite and

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primitive sensuality—acted with great gum-chewing, buttocks-wriggling, nasty élan by Bette Davis. But what has happened to him, and to the audience whose surrogate he is as Val or Brick or Chance Wayne could not be, not even Blanche or Maggie, is that there is now a sense of destiny continued under a placating star, that the painfulness of what we are and are driven to do is eased by being faced and by being given a counter-image, tenuous but lasting; and the whole thing has managed to work because for once there are no false moves, no violence seeking meaning but exhausting it, no orgasmic aspirations and no proliferation from a center without its own center.

It is almost enough to compensate for all those other things, that ephemeral, debased theater, that Williams hasn't yet ceased to give us. Indeed, as memory pares away the inessential, it does compensate. (*At the Royale.*)

RICHARD GILMAN

THE SCREEN

Trouble in Greeneland

TOO OFTEN the movies successfully set up a Graham Greene kind of situation with lively conflict between good and evil, and then spoil it with over-production and a failure to follow the argument to its logical conclusion. American film makers missed their opportunity last year in "The Devil at Four O'Clock," and now the English lamely muddle through with "The Singer Not the Song" (Warner). Handsomely photographed in Technicolor and Cinemascope in a sunny mountain village in Spain which serves very well the story's Latin-American locale, the picture starts tensely enough with the arrival of a new, unwelcomed priest. He soon discovers that the town is dominated by Anacleto, a vicious bandit who hates the Church and has so bullied and corrupted the people that they no longer turn to police or priest for help.

So the priest cleans up the cobwebby church and is determined to win back the people, even Anacleto. And the evil bandit is equally determined to get rid of the priest, especially when some of the people start attending Mass. After the failure of two attempts to kill the priest, Anacleto realizes he can hurt him more by terrorizing the town folk—who mysteriously die, according to the bandit's diabolic plan, in alphabetical order. Later, when the police banish Anacleto and his henchmen, and good seems to have triumphed over evil, the bandit, supposedly subdued, returns and asks to live with the priest. And the good priest, willing to risk anything to save this man's soul, takes in the cunning bandit who hypocritically studies the priest's books and asks, "Are you the exceptional man of which your Church is unworthy, or is it your Church that makes men like you?"

By this time, "The Singer Not the Song," which runs well over two hours, becomes repetitive, and the screenplay, written by Nigel Balchin from Audrey Erskine Lindop's novel, seems to be saying the same things over and over. Some of the scenes are staged very well, but the accumulation of them is more contrived than convincing. In an intensely sincere performance, John Mills is quite moving as the priest; and while Dirk Bogarde has an effective swagger as the ruthless bandit, his satanic smile and his one, overworked raised eyebrow grow rather tiresome. Futhermore, Mylene Demongeot, the sexy French blonde who plays the girl whom Anacleto uses to trap his victim when the bandit discovers she is in love with the priest, is strangely miscast. Any but the most naive seminarian would have discovered what that confused babe was up to early in the game. Perhaps that is the trouble with the whole movie: it tries so hard at such great length that the viewer has the right to expect more than its vaguely existential finale. Both the singer and the song are rewarding but the counterpoint is exhausting.

JOHN CASSAVETES, the actor-turned-producer-director, made critics and paying audiences sit up and take notice with his "Shadows," a film which had no written script but was improvised from scene to scene by the directors and his cast. Although "Shadows" was made on a very low budget and was a touch amateurish at times, it had a great deal of vitality and was unusually outspoken on the subject of Negro-white relationships. Now Mr. Cassavetes is a big-time producer-director; and his first film made at Paramount is on exhibition. This movie has a script, which Cassavetes wrote with Richard Carr; and while it too has a certain fresh vitality, the finished picture is so diffuse that it seems more amateurish than "Shadows."

"Too Late Blues" is about a group of small-time jazz musicians, and of one in particular whose high musical standards disappear when he can't face reality. Bobby Darin plays this role of the optimistic and idealistic musician well enough, but he isn't helped too much by the script which never makes clear why the disillusionment sets in. "Too Late Blues" has some fine background music in the sound track; and the jazz musicians hired to do the playing off-screen for the on-screen actors give their all; in fact they are so good, one wonders why this "combo" doesn't hit the big time. It never does. But the movie wanders somewhat aimlessly in a sordid atmosphere steeped in liquor and sex that sets the tone of the picture. Bobby and his associates have higher musical than moral standards.

Every now and then, Cassavetes brightens the mood with some light clowning on the part of Darin and his playmates; and one scene in a park, when the combo

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of The Commonweal

is playing to no audience and decides this is for the birds and then joins a ball game, is the best thing in the movie. Pretty Stella Stevens tries hard to put over the role of a struggling singer who also furnishes the story's love interest. But the script, which is not very helpful to her either, never can decide whether she's a nymphomaniac or an alcoholic or a girl who should have stayed on the farm. Perhaps the answer is that Mr. Cassavetes, who obviously cares about cinema and wants to use the medium to say something, should select his themes more carefully and should settle on a well-written, definitely-planned screenplay next time. In spite of "Too Late Blues," it's not too late, Cassavetes.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

OF NOTE

Student Sit-Ins

ONE OF THE most striking developments on the American educational scene during recent months has been the support given by students to the sit-in and non-violent protest movements. In the December issue of the mimeographed "Social Action Summary" of the National Federation of Catholic College Students, issued at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart in Purchase, N.Y., student-editor Diane Cassens described the experiences of a group of Manhattanville girls who joined the sit-ins in Maryland. The major part of her report follows:

It was originally planned for us to go down to Baltimore via a chartered bus from Yale under the auspices of the Northern Student Movement Coordinating Committee (N.S.M.C.C.). Connections became tangled, however, so we set out at 6:30 a.m. by car. By 11:30, Baltimore was reached and the Metropolitan Methodist Church, the headquarters of the day's demonstration, discovered.

Approximately one hundred and fifty people, mostly students, were already there, and our welcome was rather overwhelming. Upon learning where we were from, the chairman of the demonstration promptly and loudly announced the "arrival of six girls from Manhattanville College in New York," which was followed by a hearty (and heartwarming) round of applause. And a cup of steaming hot coffee, served by the pastor and his ladies' auxiliary, was just a sample of the Southern hospitality extended to us throughout the day.

The demonstration, arranged largely through the Congress On Racial Equality (CORE), was well organized. After registration, we were all assigned groups of approximately twelve people, each with a rather equal cross-section by sex and color. My group was led by

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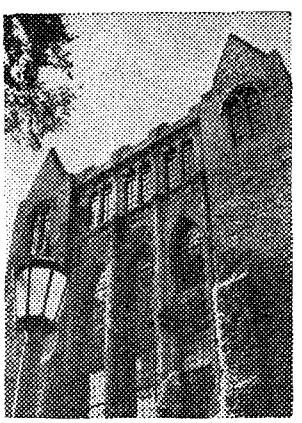

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Phylis Hendricks, an experienced group leader (those in authority always seemed to know exactly what to do next and when), and Travis Britt, one of the Freedom Riders in McComb, Mississippi. The rest of the group included four Negro students from various Southern colleges, two white boys from Yale and Dartmouth, a white teacher from Johns Hopkins University and the three Manhattanville girls.

Before we started out for our designated restaurants, we were given very explicit orders on what to expect and what would be the procedure: we were going to sit-in and picket, all legal enough, but the most important thing was to remember always the Biblical instruction to "turn the other cheek." And perhaps that was the most impressive feeling we were left with after the day was over—the Negroes I met were never at all bitter toward the white man, as I really almost expected them to be. Instead, they conveyed the attitude of regarding the white man (who was denying them such fundamental rights as eating in a place of their own choice) not as an aggressor to be violently beaten, but as a person who just did not know any better and must therefore be slowly "taught" through passive reaction only. Just seeing these Negroes was enough to fortify our ideals and belief in the real necessity of action.

The first restaurant my group was assigned to approach was the Harvey House, which had resorted to hiring a private policeman at the rate of $50 per day to stand by the door and legally deny our entrance into the restaurant. All we could do, then, was to picket in front for about half an hour, carrying such signs as "Let's End Segregation," "Support Student Sit-Ins" and "Civil Rights Over States' Rights." According to the law we had to retain a four-foot distance between the picketers and keep absolute silence on the line. The latter was easily the hardest to do, especially when passer-bys were sure we were out of our minds and resorted to calling us "white trash" (the comments were somehow directed to the white participants only). I wanted so much to go up to them and question their concept of charity, but our purpose was really to make the people of Baltimore aware of the existing situation and that we did.

Although they did not hire private policemen, we were likewise refused entrance by the owners of the Mt Vernon restaurant and the China Clipper who forcibly blocked the door as we approached and sneered rather animalistically at us. Again, all we could legally do was picket and attract the attention of those people who passed by. A fourth place visited, the Asia, actually closed its doors to *all* business so that we couldn't even picket.

The Shell House was the last restaurant on our list and here we finally made it inside. We sat divided and mixed into groups of six, four and two, and when we asked to be served, we were, of course, refused. We

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were to try and remain inside the restaurant attracting attention as long as possible, a purpose that was aided by the fact that, in order for us to be ejected from the premises, we had to be "read out." This consisted of having an ordinance to the state constitution (which concerned the right of restaurants, considered literally as "private property," to refuse to serve certain "trespassers" at their discretion) read to us in the presence of an officer.

Finally, after having been asked to leave, we began again to picket outside, and with the Greyhound Bus Terminal directly across the street, happily did not go unnoticed. And perhaps the climax of the afternoon's events occurred when a white woman stopped and asked us ironically, "Did you congratulate them on their show of Christmas spirit?" and then proceeded to do it herself.

When we returned to the church to report our progress, that same overwhelming spirit of welcome awaited us. And while we were waiting for everyone to return, we further solidified the common bond between us all by singing such spirituals as "Oh, Freedom" and "We Shall Overcome." It had been a long day, but how rewarding were the results. We were *all* Americans, working for an American cause!

The Grandmother

She went alone
Not especially lonely leaning
On the narrow wind winding
Her diaphanous scarf
Tight about her taut
Body. A wisp of silver silk
Filtered her vision, trembling
At her tearless eyes.

Her steps were
Certain enough given the rocky
Condition of the road rough from
Too little travel
And cobbled with
No great care. Through the dark
Wood where the thin sick wind
Hid, she went.

Beyond the wood
And now no wind thinning
Her silvered hair and now no
Road cobbled to
Anoint reality,
She went alone up the black
Path, knocked at the castle door,
And it opened.

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BOOKS

The Narrow Doors to the Halls of Ivy

How an Ivy League College Decides on Admissions. By Katherine Kinkead. Norton. $2.95.

by Ronald Gross

HIGHER EDUCATION has now become virtually the only road—though admittedly a wide one—to social and occupational advancement for young Americans. College admissions officers thus find themselves with the awkward responsibility for selecting those who will become the nation's leading citizenry. Increasingly, the criteria for admission to college determine who receives the advanced training which has become the *sine qua non* of leadership in a complex technological society. But college administrators and outside critics are beginning to fear that the criteria are neither sufficiently broad nor adequately valid. If this is so, our colleges and universities are overlooking certain kinds of human ability which the nation can ill afford to lose.

This book, slightly expanded from a *New Yorker* piece with the more engaging title, "The Brightest Ever," describes how Yale picked the class which entered in September 1960. The author keeps her prose under tight rein, letting the various members of Yale's Admissions Office tell the story in their own words.

The story is one of wise and dedicated people working hard at a frustrating job: trying to make the most of "the painful blessings of being truly selective." Eighty-five per cent of the candidates each year are so bright that Yale would have considered them fully qualified twenty-five years ago, yet the College can only admit about 20%. The task is to balance one factor against another in each candidate's dossier. Among the evidence are the high school record, College Entrance Examination Board aptitude and achievement scores, academic and character references, comments of interviewers, and the youngster's own statements on the application blank.

These materials are studied by two or more admissions officials, rated yes, no, or maybe, and analyzed by the University's Office of Educational Research, which predicts each applicant's probable freshman grade average with an accuracy within four points for half the class and within six points for two-thirds. Each case is then discussed by an admissions committee which includes faculty members and administrators unconnected with the Admissions Office. This committee makes the final decision on the basis of the analyzed evidence, determining whether or not to admit each student and how much scholarship help he needs.

This whole process, as ably chronicled by the author, is an arduous and exasperating one. Its frustrating character is conveyed by an Associate Freshman Dean summing up his experience on the admissions committee: ". . . you sometimes have the nasty feeling that you could take all the thousands (of evaluation forms)—except those for the five hundred students at the top of the list and the five hundred at the bottom, whose ratings nobody could honestly question—and you could throw them down the stairs, pick up any thousand, and produce as good a class as the one that will come out of the committee meeting."

Aside from urging that high school guidance departments be staffed by better people, Mrs. Kinkead has no recommendations for improving the system. "Unless major innovations not now anticipated are introduced," she concludes with resignation, "the admissions procedure, with its intricate weighing of youthful achievements and personalities, with its pondering of figures and its preoccupation with numbers, will remain necessarily as delicately complex for a good many years to come." But major innovations are exactly what we need, and the public interest, if not the consciences of the colleges, will probably demand that they be made in the near future. For admission to college, when viewed from a wider perspective than that of a single institution, is a serious social problem.

Actually, the situation is much worse than Mrs. Kinkead's study of Yale's admissions procedures would suggest. There is growing recognition by college administrators that they are selecting from too narrow a range of human abilities. Yale tries to avoid this—"diversity is the word," according to Mrs. Kinkead. But it is clear that even Yale pays heavily for its rigorous scholastic selectivity, finding itself unable to accept many students with highly specialized interests, weak showings on the standardized multiple-choice tests, or poor socio-economic backgrounds.

Moreover, there are signs at other institutions of real dissatisfaction with the admissions process. For example, in 1956 the University of Kansas experimented by admitting 208 students who had failed their college entrance tests. Four years later they announced that forty-six had made the Dean's Honor List, six made honor societies, and one made Phi Beta Kappa. At the other end of the academic spectrum, but reflecting the same concern, Harvard recently decided that, despite its large number of superior applicants for admission, the College could not escape the necessity for "risk-taking" judgments in selecting students. So one-third of recent applicants whose test scores "predicted" they would do honors work were turned down in favor of students who seemed to have hidden potential untapped by the tests.

Clearly, there is a growing feeling that the whole process of selecting students for college through increasingly rigorous mass tests has reached a *cul de sac*. Too many students who do poorly on the tests turn out to be first-rate scholars or extremely valuable citizens, and too many students who rack up prodigious test scores drop out of college and never fulfill their promise.

It seems that the changes that are needed in the recruitment and selection of students for college will have to be qualitative rather than quantitative. Colleges will have to find ways to demand and measure *different* characteristics in their appli-

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cants, rather than simply demanding still higher marks on the tests now used. And to decide what distinctive characteristics it wants in its students, each college will have to decide what particular educational job it really wants to do.

The colleges are crucial institutions in the current tension in this country between maintaining equality of opportunity by rewarding talent with advancement, and the danger of creating a "meritocracy": a society stratified on the basis of limited kinds of ability. The answer to this dilemma, in higher education as elsewhere, is to provide opportunities for the development of a wide diversity of human qualities and abilities, rather than merely offering advancement to the possessors of commercially valuable technical skills.

Daisy Miller-land

Successful Love. By Delmore Schwartz. Corinth. $4.50.

by Alice Ellen Mayhew

IN THESE stories, Daisy Miller is invited to stretch out on the couch once again for an examination of her professional, platitudinous, indestructible innocence. *Chez* Schwartz, the Daisy Millers come in all sizes: young ladies, to be sure, but also doctors of metaphysics, mommas and poppas, professors, little and big boys, United States Senators, newspaper reporters, and boards of trustees with their presidents. This time Daisy's caught on home grounds, the fairy land, the fabled America of her own imagination that Columbus thought was the Indies, but which was really Hollywood.

For in this volume, as in his poetry, Delmore Schwartz is concerned with the relationship between dream and reality, good and evil. In the six short stories reprised here, and two hitherto unpublished novellas, Schwartz is not concerned with the social or sociological Daisy, or with American mores, but with conscience and American morals. Lecturing his readers in asides, he is writing in a strong philosophical vein about existentialism (with more creative understanding than other American writers)—the nature of commitment, the intelligibility of the world, dedication to the real world instead of to preconceived notions or sterilized, liberalized isolation boxes.

The particular state of innocence, a term which one may take as interchangeable with dream as opposed to reality on the intellectual level, or with evil on the moral plane, is the opposite of *engagement* or commitment. It is the recurrent theme of every one of these stories: the persistent innocence of adults who reject experience and ignore the world. They represent the antinomy of Kierkegaard's definition of reality as, "something which must be experienced; (which is) not a problem to be analyzed, discussed and explained before the future has become the past." Schwartz is dealing here with the intensity and cruelty of unawareness, the appalling ignorance. The innocents may raise a lot of hell, and they may even have their charm (though they are hard on the rest of the world) as they champion vacuum-held causes and theories, but they remain untouched, poised in a state of motionless, selfish ecstasy.

One of the characters in *The Hartford Innocents*, a novella about a group of coeds who defy the world —one suspects their motives—to keep an abandoned Negro child rather than give him up for adoption, remarks to another, "My dear, Reality is merely your ingenious and skillful secretary and research assistant." The other admits this is true, then adds, "Reality is merely my silent partner: silent! my dear, and present only at the proper time, and briefly. . ."

This is Mr. Schwartz's central attack, however urbanely, experimentally or surrealistically it is severally presented here. One of the best examples is a short story entitled, *The Track Meet*, in which a dreaming (or not) man sees presented before him human motives, acts, treacheries, natural inclinations, absolutely raw. And when his guide (for the man is a tourist in the real world) answers his complaint about the un-

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fairness of this world he is seeing for the first time, the guide, an Englishman called Law, says, "You are interested in platitudes, but I am interested in reality."

Most of Mr. Schwartz's characters, however, are sincere and honest in their evasion of truth. There *are* the terrifying innocents, dictatorial and dangerous, but the author is really talking about the annihilating innocence in us all: the backs turned on truth in the name of erudition and on compassion in the name of liberality, for private motives and personal thrills; "the evil that has terrified is rooted in your own mind and heart. . . ," says Law. "Look at yourself! *Just look at yourself!*"

Thus, Mr. Schwartz states his dictum: "Idealism rideth to a fall, like pride itself . . . and innocence goeth before cynicism, disappointment being the midwife of the bitter change; worst of all, innocence soweth the grapes of Quixotism and drinketh the wine of chaos; and radicalism, triumphantly established, becometh nihilism."

There is also a superb short story about a desiccated, guilt-ridden professor who is a stranger to the world and a novella about a child prodigy and his child bride, a man who can not learn the difference between being intelligent and getting a Ph.D. *summa cum laude*, "in metaphysics, mind you," comments a friend, "the study of the ultimate nature of reality."

Let me only add that Mr. Schwartz writes marvelously well, and with great wit. I hope his book will be widely read, particularly by those, like myself, who will be coming upon him for the first time.

Beyond Rationalism

Reason and Faith in Modern Society. By Eduard Heimann. Wesleyan University Press. $6.50.

by Bernard Murchland

WE MUST be grateful to those experts who keep a critical eye on social developments. Dr. Heimann, a sociologist and economist who teaches at Union Theological Semi-

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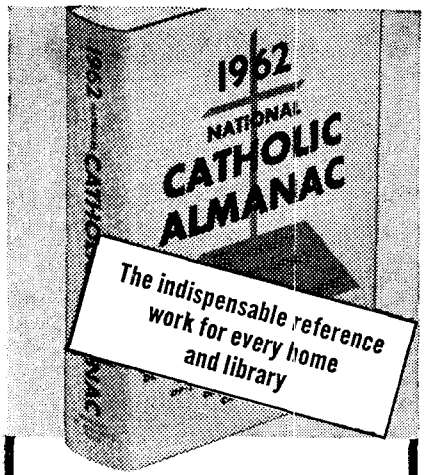

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nary, is such an expert. Because he is also an ethicist he is equipped to elaborate his critique within a broader framework of vision. That critique, in brief, goes like this:

Democracy, defined as a union of liberty and equality, sprang from religion and continues to draw its furtive inspiration from the moral inheritance left by religion. For potent historical reasons, however, democracy became officially severed from its religious source and ran into crisis and decline as liberty and equality proved irreconcilable on the plane of rational principle. The doctrine of liberty came more and more to lean toward rational individualism: liberty was to be realized at the expense of community and basic equality. Its opposite, Marxist socialism, originally designed to restore the balance, was driven by the same rationalist logic to reject liberty for the sake of equality, understood as uniformity, and thus logically ended in totalitarianism. The regeneration of democracy is, accordingly, a task of both spiritual and institutional reconstruction.

As is evident from this summary, Dr. Heimann is going after the big ideas. And like an increasing number of such books (I am reminded, for example, of Karl Jasper's *The Future of Mankind*) his thesis combines a vast amount of information with high moral fervor. In fact we might say, in stronger terms, that his book represents a formidable tower of scholarly research erected upon a profound disappointment in the present course of Western civilization. Two elements of his disappointment loom large throughout: one, the failure of "rationality" and, two, the failure of representatives of religion "to shed the light of the faith upon the troubles of the times and to integrate the intellectual-spiritual discoveries of the times into the system of faith."

The failure of rationality is demonstrated in such social phenomena as the dehumanizing presence of technology, the dominant influence of a profit-mad capitalism, deadening bureaucracy and the mass means of communications. Science, in this perspective, could hardly fail to come in for some scathing words. In Dr. Heimann's opinion it precludes "in-

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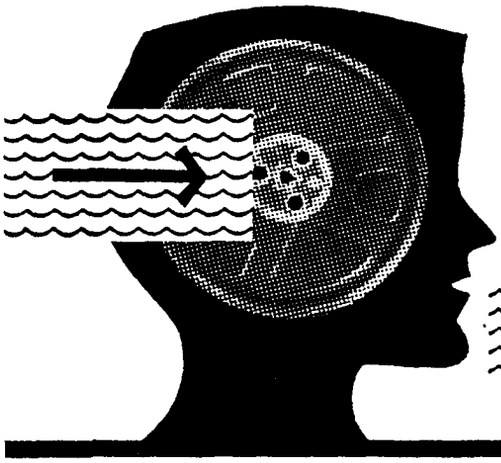
sight" and "wisdom," which are "not born into man" but "grow and mature in him and with him through his work." He states, and perhaps overstates, his case against science in these words: "But no wisdom, no maturity, no personal growth is required for scientific greatness today; one either is a great physicist at twenty-three, endowed by nature with the extraordinary brain power which this requires, or one will never become a great physicist. The scientist as such is a man of power without responsibility." And again, "The quality of rationality, characterizing as it does the race, cannot constitute the uniqueness of individuality." These words may have a suspicious ring to those who have traveled much in the kingdoms of our Greco-Latin tradition.

But Dr. Heimann adopts a point of view that would transcend this tradition. His thesis is basically an effort to equate rationality with necessity (and reject this as a workable social or moral formula) and individuality with creativity (and promote this as the principle of Christian regeneration today). Creation is "the act of putting there something that could not have been predicted" and is closely allied with Dr. Heimann's notion of Christian liberty, which is the power of a self "to realize, manifest, fulfill its distinctive creative power in a distinctive act, however modest, beyond the natural necessities." Freedom, then, in transcending necessity introduces a new level of meaning which is the beginning of a regeneration "where new forces may accrue to personal life and give it a new meaning by giving it a new purpose, while the regeneration of society may add a new span of time to the life of the spiritual organism."

The elements of a Christian social ethic include therefore: the mutual origin and dignity of the person and the community; justice born of love; the totality of man's life in the spirit, in the flesh and in the institutions which minister to both; the ensuing importance of institutions for man's life in the spirit; and the Christian possibility of self-transcendence in a new birth of the "spirit." Such a program, founded as it is upon the no-



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tion of liberty, is thereby confided to the fragile care of an untrustworthy servant. History has often shown and Scripture at all times confirms the treacherous character of this gift of freedom. But each new death of freedom, argues Heimann, is an occasion for its rebirth—a rebirth that is beyond moral effort, beyond any law, beyond predictability.

Dr. Heimann has written an able and valuable book. What he has to say about the failure of rationality and the failure of the Churches can hardly be denied. Again, the relevance of Christianity to our forms of social life (and the irrelevance of Communism) is well established. Yet if I were to make a criticism it would be this: in arguments of this sort there is a tendency to slip over into a moralistic camp when we discover the weaknesses (or failures) of rationality. The terminology of moral argument—"rebirth," "new forces," "creativity," "unpredictability" and so forth—is tricky and while the validity of introducing it is beyond question it does sometimes conceal the same kind of "rational" failure in the critic that he descries in others. When Kant demolished the possibility of metaphysics he sang moving odes to duty and the stars. When Hegel's logical dialectic got out of hand it immediately became a prisoner to the blind tyranny of the will. Gilson has remarked that when philosophical ideas grow weak, moralism, frequently tinged with mysticism, assumes the direction of human life. This can be seen throughout the history of human thought.

But it does not seem to me that the choice has to be between philosophy understood as natural necessity, on the one hand, and moralism on the other. It is true that much of intellectual history has floundered on one or another of these extremes. But the paradigm of rational thought is neither the rigorous methodology of mathematics nor the limited perspectives of ethics (and certainly not the cloudy horizons of mysticism). It is the affinity mind has for reality and, particularly, human and spiritual reality. Socrates, who could confess that the one thing he knew was that he knew nothing, nevertheless defended his profession, philoso

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phy, in a glorious tribute to the role of mind in the direction of life, one that has never really been refuted.

There is then a way of defining rationality other than in terms of its failure. There is also a way of defining it as the controlling factor of morality. That we live amidst the ruins of a failure to do this is not necessarily an indication that it cannot be done. We also live, let us bear in mind, amidst perhaps worse ruins of spirited moral renewals. Thus it does us little good to bemoan the march of science. And I fear Dr. Heimann makes science too much of a bogey man. I share his regret concerning the dominance of the "scientific attitude" and have recently said as much in these pages. But this does not mean that I regret science; rather I regret the inability of "rationality" to further construe itself in persuasive philosophical and spiritual channels.

A corrupt rationalism is detestable; to unloose the furies of moralism untrammeled is perhaps worse. My point is that Dr. Heimann's program, in order to safeguard the ideals of personal freedom and social justice it so rightly sees to need safeguarding, must make a great effort to protect itself from the dangers of obscurantism, fanaticism and empty rhetoric. I fear that the elimination of rationality is not a healthy guarantee of such protection. I fear, in a word, that the identification of rationality with necessity (and all its overtones of legalism, narrowness and blind obedience) is to take a very dim view of the creative powers of reason itself. Such powers can even accommodate a certain irrationality—but we must note that it is a question of irrationality (a defect of reason) and not non-rationality (which would be an absence of reason).

Our Miss Moore

A Marianne Moore Reader. By Marianne Moore. Viking. $6.95.

by Janet Fiscalini

ONE MAY sometimes regret Miss Moore's having become a literary establishment, but it has given her

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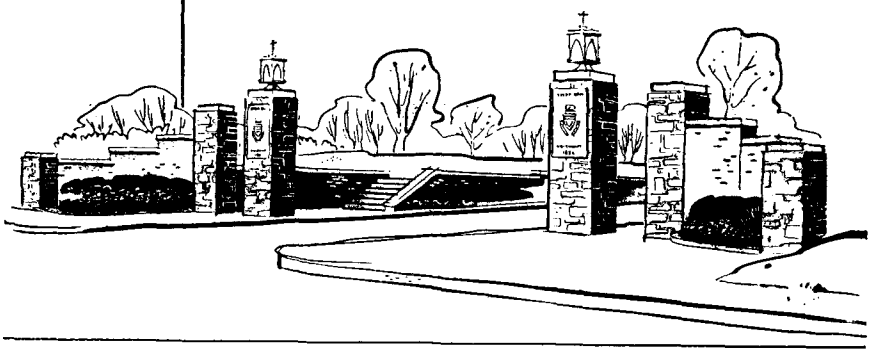

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good practice in answering foolish questions. Her foreword to this anthology is pleasantly pithy:

" 'I think I might call you a moralist,' the inquirer began . . . 'I think perhaps I am. I do not trust promises and deeds of mercy right and left to write a lyric—if what I write is ever one'—a qualification received with smiles by a specialist (or proseur turned poseur) . . ."

The anthology is generous, though the verse selection seems a little unfair to her early work. One misses "The Jerboa," "Melancthon," "The Monkeys," among others. However, the emphasis upon the La Fontaine translations may please a wide audience and there is arrestingly lovely writing in her late work. The sense in which "The Sycamore" may not be a lyric will not matter to many people:

. . . . a little dry
thing from the grass, ,
in the shape of a Maltese cross,
retiringly formal
as if to say: "And there was I
like a field-mouse at Versailles."

Of Miss Moore's prose—it is hard to say it without awkwardness—the most interesting part is concerned with poetry. The two general critical essays are sane, honest and undogmatic, and will refresh anyone tired of the excessess of programs and academies. The deeply knowledgeable essays on Pound, Eliot and Edith Sitwell abound with formal insights. In criticism, her negative accomplishment is very dazzling: she never says anything foolish, and she rarely oppresses the obvious.

The interview with Donald Hall is informative, and very well managed. The "Ford Letters," reprinted from the *New Yorker,* and the article on Brooklyn, reprinted from *Harper's Bazaar,* have a casual attraction, but I see no reason for reprinting the rest of the prose. The book reviews are conscientiously occasional, and the essays on Lincoln and Henry James are nondescript. I found the fantasy "My Crow, Pluto" almost offensively silly. One of the few amusing passages describes Miss Moore's diet: "Nor was the crow's intuition amiss, since he liked a great many kinds of food I like—honey, Anheuser-Busch high potency yeast, dehydrated al-

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alfa, water cress, buckwheat cakes. . . "

Perhaps this whimsicality was to ɔe expected, once Miss Moore be-ame a literary legend. It was in-vitable that the poet of the legend -the fine-featured woman in the por-rait on the dust jacket, whose three-ornered hat recalls her interest in he eighteenth century, the observer ɔf small, uncommon animals, the re-entless fan of the Brooklyn Dodgers, he casual advertiser of Anheuser-Busch high potency yeast—should be figure of intense oddities, at once nnocent and self-conscious.

Indeed one finds something like he whimsicality in part of her work, ut it is that small part in which he parodies herself. One finds it here her splendid and precise im-gery turns overly elaborate, or here a rarer gift—of unforced epi-ram—is overcast by eccentric dic-ion. It is hard to think of a poet riting in English who is wittier or nore graceful. But in the early po-ms one is sometimes bothered by a tudiously polysyllabic manner, and n the later ones, by a tone of suspect aiveté. If there is archness as well s eccentricity, in such passages, it oes not come from the attitude ɔward the subject, but from that un-ertain relation to the audience hich is characteristic of so much ontemporary poetry.

The question is too delicate for a eview, and in poems like "A Grave," New York," "Virginia Brittanica," or Like a Withered Daffodil," it does ot matter at all. But it would be a ity if anyone should miss such oems because he was unsusceptible ɔ the charm of the legend, or be-ause it led him to mistake Miss loore's occasional mannerisms for er style.

REVIEWERS

Ronald Gross contributes to *Commen-ry*, the *New Leader* and other journals nd is the editor of the forthcoming *Great ssays on Education*.

Alice Ellen Mayhew, a regular con-ibutor, is on the staff of a New York pub-shing house.

Father Bernard G. Murchland, C.S.C., a member of the faculty of Notre Dame ollege in Welland, Ontario.

Janet Fiscalini has contributed verse to *ccent* and the *Chicago Review*, as well as he Commonweal.

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